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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [SOCI](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: LUBNA HUSSEIN CONTINUES HER CRUSADE AGAINST SHARIA LAW

REF: A) KHARTOUM 870 B) KHARTOUM 888 C) KHARTOUM 905
D) KHARTOUM 1020 E) KHARTOUM 1036

1. (SBU) Summary: Almost four months after journalist and former United Nations press employee Lubna Ahmed al-Hussein gained tremendous international attention for wearing pants in public, she appears determined not to allow the incident to quietly fade away. Despite threats and travel restrictions, she continues to pursue a conviction reversal and is suing a government official for defamation of character. Her goal is to effect changes in Sudan's system of Sharia Law. End summary.

Not Willing to Let Issue Fade

2. (SBU) On October 26, Lubna Hussein told poloff of her continuing appeal to overturn the September 7 conviction of violating Sudanese criminal code article 152 (indecent dress). Hussein served one day in jail after her 500SDG (approximately USD220) fine was paid, on her behalf and against her wishes, by the head of the pro-government Sudanese Journalists' Union. Having appealed her conviction upon her release, she awaits a response from the judicial system. Hussein admitted that she hopes (and expects) to lose this appeal so that she can take the issue further and appeal it to the Constitutional Court of Sudan.

3. (SBU) Ms. Hussein has also filed a defamation lawsuit against the Speaker of the National Legislative Assembly, Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir. She accused the speaker of making slanderous comments about her in a press interview that was published in an Arabic-language newspaper. She believes the comments taint her reputation and negatively affect her appeal. Ms. Hussein requested the lifting of the speaker's immunity in order to pursue a case against him; however, the request was rejected. Hussein was insistent that she will continue looking for a way to pursue both her appeal and the defamation lawsuit. She claimed her objective is to test Sudanese laws and judicial procedures until she finds justice even in an instance where the accused is a government official. She acknowledged that her case is minor compared to other situations, especially in Darfur, but she believes that her efforts will ultimately benefit all Sudanese women.

Threatened and Denied Exit Visas

4. (SBU) Since the arrest of Ms. Hussein on July 3, she was denied an exit visa to travel outside of Sudan on two separate occasions. In August, prior to her trial and conviction, she was denied permission to travel to Lebanon. Ms. Hussein claimed her request did not go through the normal court process for a decision but rather was refused immediately by the police. (Note: Sudan customarily denies travel for defendants out on bond awaiting trial. End note.)

A second exit visa request for travel to the United Kingdom in October made it all the way to the court judge for a response, but authorities similarly denied this request. Hussein claimed the Government of Sudan (GOS) has placed her under a complete ban and will not allow her to travel via any means, whether by land, air or sea.

15. (SBU) Although she did not appear overly concerned, Hussein acknowledged receiving numerous anonymous threats, including death and rape threats. Some of the individuals who contacted Hussein have threatened further charges against her, including crimes that, if she were to be convicted, could result in the punishment of stoning, as permitted under Sharia Law. (Note: Although stoning is cited as a punishment for some acts in Sudan, the punishment has not been carried out in recent memory. End note.) Even though friends and colleagues have warned her of the dangers of challenging the government so directly, she does not seem daunted. Hussein claimed to have refused suggestions from activist groups who believe she should leave Sudan. Instead, she has vowed to stay and continue her efforts to change the law.

16. (SBU) Comment: While GOS officials may wish to sweep this case under the rug and let it die quietly in the media, Hussein is determined to persist and keep it alive. It is unlikely that she will be successful at getting immunity lifted from a high-level government official, but she is not afraid to push the envelope and force open previously-closed doors. Through her determined efforts, her case continues to progress in full public view. Aware as she is of the international draw of her case, she has recently signed a book contract with a French publisher. End Comment.

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